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12. — *Annals of the Boston Primary School Committee from its first Establishment in* 1818 *to its Dissolution in* 1855. Compiled by JOSEPH M. WIGHTMAN. Boston: George C. Rand and Avery, City Printers. 1860. 8vo. pp. 8 and 305.

THIS volume has only a limited and local interest; but as an historical sketch of one branch of the school system in this community it merits high commendation. On the adoption of the revised city charter in November, 1854, the Primary School Committee ceased to exist, and the functions formerly exercised by it were transferred to another body. For nearly forty years, however, it had possessed almost the entire control of the primary school education in this city, and for the greater part of this period its authority was undisputed. How it discharged this important trust is a question which was warmly discussed for several years; and in order to show what had been done, the Board, at one of its latest meetings, requested the Executive Committee "to draw up a brief history of the Primary School Committee from their organization until the present time." In compliance with this request, Mr. Wightman, who was then Chairman of the Executive Committee, presented at the last meeting of the Board, January 2, 1855, a brief narrative of the principal events in its history, which he has since expanded into the comprehensive and luminous record before us. The volume has all the fulness and accuracy of detail which it is now possible to obtain; and from the active part taken by Mr. Wightman in defence of the Board, during the last years of its existence, it is not surprising that he should sometimes write in a partisan spirit; but for the most part he is singularly candid and dispassionate in his statements, and his volume will tend to remove many of the prejudices formerly existing against the organization whose history he has related.

The Primary School Committee was established by a vote of the town in June, 1818, after a prolonged discussion of the subject, and in accordance with a petition drawn up by the late Elisha Ticknor, for several years teacher of the Town Grammar School at the South End. At its organization the Committee consisted of thirty-six members, among the most prominent of whom were Mr. Ticknor, Mr. James Savage, Thomas L. Winthrop, Esq., Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., and Rev. Daniel Sharp; and in the first year of its existence it had under its care eighteen schools with eight hundred and fifteen pupils, supported at an expense of three thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. In its last year it numbered nearly two hundred members, and had under its charge one hundred and ninety-seven schools with twelve thousand

one hundred and seventy-two pupils, supported at an expense of more than one hundred and twenty-two thousand dollars. This simple statement is sufficient to show the practical wisdom and forethought of those who labored for the establishment of the Primary School Committee. Whether that organization had not fully accomplished its work is a question which we shall not reopen here; but certainly it is now too early to pronounce an authoritative opinion as to the comparative advantages of the old system and of that which replaced it. No one, however, can read Mr. Wightman's narrative, and examine the documents which he has cited, without respect for the disinterested and zealous laborers who carried the primary school system in this community to so great a degree of perfection.

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13. — 1. *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct.* By SAMUEL SMILES, Author of "The Life of George Stephenson." Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1860. 16mo. pp. 408.
2. *The Same.* New York: Harper and Brothers. 1860. 12mo. pp. 363.

IN a brief and interesting Preface to this volume, Mr. Smiles relates the circumstances which led to its preparation, and which in themselves afford a striking illustration of his subject. About fifteen years ago, as he informs us, he was invited to deliver a lecture before a class for mutual improvement, which had grown up from a very small beginning in one of the towns in the North of England. He accepted the invitation, though he had but little faith in popular lectures; and "he addressed them on more than one occasion, citing examples of what other men had done, as illustrations of what each might, in a greater or less degree, do for himself, and pointing out that their happiness and well-being as individuals in after life must necessarily depend mainly upon themselves, — upon their own diligent self-culture, self-discipline, and self-control, — and, above all, on that upright and honest performance of individual duty, which is the glory of manly character." The good seed thus scattered fell on fertile ground; and one evening, some years afterward, he received a visit from one of these young men who had prospered in fortune, and who "was pleased to remember with gratitude the words spoken in all honesty to him and to his fellow-pupils years before, and even to attribute some measure of his success in life to the endeavors which he had made to work up to their spirit." His interest in the subject of self-help having been thus revived, Mr. Smiles was induced to prosecute his inquiries still further, to write the Life of George Ste-